

Ghost Stories and Other Tales

Ghost Stories

A **ghost story** is a story about ghosts or other supernatural beings. In cultures all over the world, ghost stories have been told and passed down orally from generation to generation. These stories reflect the superstitious fears and beliefs that people had in various cultures.



Stories about witches, ghosts, goblins, vampires, werewolves and all sorts of land and sea monsters came out of the oral tradition of storytelling.

Tall Tales and Trickster Tales

A **tall tale** is a story with unbelievable elements that are exaggerations of the truth. The characters are usually heroes that are 'larger than life'. Many tall tales are based on actual people.



The tall tale is a part of the American folktale tradition. Some famous examples include Johnny Appleseed, Davy Crockett, Paul Bunyan, John Henry and Pecos Bill.

A **trickster tale** is a story involving a character, usually an animal, who likes to play tricks on other characters. Trickster tales are common in many cultures. Cartoons like Bugs Bunny and the Road Runner are based on trickster tales.

Urban Legends

An **urban legend**, also known as an **urban myth**, is a story that is thought to be true, but is usually not. Urban legends may contain elements of truth, but they are usually exaggerated and sensationalised.

In recent years, television programmes about urban legends have become popular. Urban legends are also commonly spread by e-mail.

Useful websites:

<http://www.americanfolklore.net/spooky-stories.html>

A collection of scary stories, ghost stories and funny ghost stories from the United States

<http://www.americanfolklore.net/tt.html>

A collection of American tall tales and trickster tales, including stories about Pecos Bill, Paul Bunyan and Brer Rabbit

<http://www.americanfolklore.net/urban-legends.html>

A collection of urban legends from the United States